

(VHD) of this family of proteins. ORFV2-VEGF contains all six cysteine residues of the cystine-knot motif which are absolutely conserved among family members. The conserved cysteine residues of the cystine knot motif are indicated with an asterisk (*). Several other invariant or highly conserved amino acids are indicated. ORFV2-VEGF does not contain the extended N- and C-terminal regions seen in VEGF-C and VEGF-D. Overall, ORFV2-VEGF is 43.3%, 34.3%, 25.4%, 26.9% and 33.6% identical to human VEGF₁₆₅ (SEQ ID NO:4), VEGF-B (SEQ ID NO:6), VEGF-C (SEQ ID NO:7), VEGF-D (SEQ ID NO:8) and PIGF (SEQ ID NO:5), respectively. The amino acid sequence of ORFV2-VEGF is 87% identical to NZ10. This sequence similarity of ORFV2-VEGF and NZ10 to the mammalian VEGFs raises the question of whether the structural relatedness extends to receptor binding and biological function.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1, 7 and 54 have been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) A method for stimulating proliferation of endothelial or mesodermal cells, wherein the cells bear VEGF receptor 2, comprising [the step of] activating the receptor via exposing said endothelial cells to an effective [endothelial or mesodermal cell proliferation-stimulating] receptor-activating amount of a polypeptide selected from the group consisting of ORFV2-VEGF and NZ10, thereby stimulating the proliferation of the cells.

7. (Amended) A method for modulating vascular permeability, comprising the step of administering an effective vascular permeability-modulating amount of [a polypeptide selected from the group consisting of ORFV2-VEGF and] an NZ10 polypeptide.

54. (Amended) [The method of Claim 1, wherein the polypeptide is NZ10] A method for stimulating proliferation of endothelial or mesodermal cells, comprising the step of exposing the endothelial cells to an effective endothelial or mesodermal cell proliferation-stimulating amount of a NZ10 polypeptide.